

# **COMMITTEE ON DENTAL AUXILIARIES**

## **PART III: HISTORY OF PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS**

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- **CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**
  - **INCREASED EFFICIENCIES**
  - **INCREASED ACCESS TO THE PROFESSION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION**
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### **SECTION 1: CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

The Committee continually evaluates the efficiency and effectiveness of all of its programs. Its efforts in this respect illustrate a key element in the overall management strategy of the Committee and its staff: a commitment to continuous quality improvement.

This approach to continual quality improvement, in keeping with the Governor's philosophy as reflected in his Total Quality Management initiative, has resulted in significant improvements in procedural efficiencies and effective delivery of services. In part, those efficiencies are reflected by a decrease in the Committee's total cost of operation while increasing the services provided to applicants. They also are reflected by data on commonly used efficiency indicators.

The Committee's practice of continual quality improvement has not been adopted as a formal program, in part because of the small size of the Committee's staff. Some practices -- that might require more formality in larger organizations -- can be performed in a small organization like the Committee by reliance upon frequent and informal personal interactions between the Executive Officer and the staff. These interactions provide the basis for two-way communication, information gathering and dissemination, directions and progress reports on work activities, collaborative planning and problem solving, and many similar business transactions that the Executive Officer and staff perform routinely.

As noted in Part VI: Recommendations and Intended Improvements, the Committee plans to explore how it can gauge customer satisfaction and continue to improve its processes in the future.

The Department's reorganization, featuring Client Service Teams, has not had a large impact on the Committee's efficiency or effectiveness, perhaps due to the relatively small size of the Committee's operation. While it is simpler to have an identifiable group of contact persons for

assistance with administrative services, the Committee is not able to quantify any demonstrable impact on the Committee's operations.

- **Cost Savings.** Actual expenditures decreased for two consecutive years, from \$983,859 in FY92/93, to \$964,048 in FY93/94, and to \$915,427 in FY94/95. While expenditures increased in FY95/96 due primarily to increased enforcement, FY95/96 net expenditures were less than 2% over that of FY 92/93.
- **Services to More People.** The Committee provided examination services to 1,178 more applicants in FY94/95 than it did in FY92/93. That represented nearly a 30% increase in the number of candidates to whom testing services were provided, with no increase in staff or overall expenditures.
- **More Frequent Services.** The Committee added a third annual RDA examination cycle during FY93/94. That additional cycle increased the frequency of the licensing examinations by 50%, making it more accessible to candidates.
- **Reduction of Fees.** The renewal fee for over 35,000 licensees was reduced by 25% in 1995 (from \$40 every two years, to \$30 every two years). The renewal fee is one of the lowest in the Department, and further fee reductions are anticipated in 1997.
- **Efficiency Indicators.** A broad indicator of efficiency is the ratio of annual expenditures to the size of the regulated population. In FY94/95, the Committee's expense ratio was \$26.8. This ratio was the lowest of all but one of the DCA agencies, and it was slightly less than one-fifth of the \$148.2 average cost across all of the DCA agencies.

## SECTION 2: INCREASED EFFICIENCIES

Some of the efficiencies implemented during the last three or four years include:

- ▶ Reduction in the number of examination personnel to the level necessary for appropriate examination oversight and administration, with resulting reductions in both personnel and travel costs.
- ▶ Reduction of examination paperwork by about 25,000 pieces of paper annually.
- ▶ Reduction by one-half of the time necessary to input exam data due to the paperwork reduction.

- ▶ Implementation of a computerized applicant tracking system, which automatically schedules applicants for examination, and issues examination notices and results of the examination.

### **SECTION 3: INCREASED ACCESS TO THE PROFESSION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION**

In addition to some of the improvements noted earlier, organizational analysis also resulted in activities to increase timely access to the professions as well as consumer protection in the following ways:

- ▶ Decreased time from date of examination to license issuance, which results in the ability of new licensees to obtain jobs sooner.
- ▶ Implemented a program to investigate the criminal backgrounds of all applicants. This assures that consumers are protected from auxiliaries with criminal backgrounds that may effect their ability to safely practice.
- ▶ Completed an occupational analysis of RDAs, which resulted in the addition of duties which RDAs are allowed to perform.
- ▶ Pursued a regulatory change which will allow testing on the RDA practical examination of the placement of a temporary crown, one of the most commonly performed RDA procedures. This validated the examination and will assure that candidates can perform this procedure safely on patients.
- ▶ Ceased testing two procedures on the RDA practical exam, since they were duties that can be performed legally by unlicensed dental assistants. This eliminated an unnecessary barrier to the profession.
- ▶ As a result of the 1993 occupational analysis, revised the RDA written exam to assure its focus on RDA duties, patient safety, and infection control. These changes will ensure that candidates who pass the exam can perform RDA duties on patients safely.
- ▶ Eliminated the requirement that candidates for EF licensure pass an examination in the fitting of trial endodontic filling points. This eliminated an unnecessary barrier to the profession.
- ▶ Progress toward completion of occupational analyses of RDHs and EFs, which will also be used to evaluate the examinations for each of those categories, as well as the appropriateness of their current scopes of practice.

- ▶ Progress toward the preparation of a handbook, and bi-annual newsletters, to ensure that auxiliaries are kept informed of the regulations and laws by which they must practice. This will help assure that they do not perform illegal duties and thereby threaten the health and safety of consumers.
  
- ▶ Implementation of an RDA educational program five-year re-inspection cycle, thereby assuring that candidates for licensure are properly trained to perform procedures safely on patients.